



VisitEngland™



Quality Standard

# Taste

VisitEngland's Taste scheme for tourism businesses

1

Taste

# Contents

2

Introduction

3

Sustainability & Accessibility

5

Taste scheme criteria

# Introduction

## What is the Taste scheme?

VisitEngland is committed to helping all types of tourism business offer a great experience for their guests, including England's wide variety of restaurants, cafes, pubs and food outlets.

VisitEngland's Taste scheme recognises businesses which offer the warmest of welcomes and excellent customer service, alongside high quality food and drink. Businesses utilising local suppliers, ingredients and dishes also have the potential to be recognised with a Local Food Accolade.

The Taste scheme is suitable for all types of food business, from fine dining to fast food. Whether you're a pub, café, tearoom or takeaway, a Taste Accolade could be awarded.

VisitEngland works with destinations and local assessment organisations to offer this accreditation scheme on a local level. However, if a business is in an area without a local scheme, they can apply to VisitEngland directly.

## How will a visit be completed?

VisitEngland has a team of highly experienced assessors with in depth experience of the tourism sector. They experience best practice in all areas and can pass that knowledge on to you for the benefit of your business. They will assess your business honestly and always with the objective of helping you to improve.

The visit will be unannounced and can take place at any time during your opening hours. Once the assessor has completed the assessment, they will announce themselves and spend some time with you, giving feedback on their visit and confirming your score.

## Scores

The criteria required to achieve a VisitEngland Taste Accolade are outlined later in this booklet. For each element, a score will be awarded:

- 1 = poor
- 2 = disappointing
- 3 = good
- 4 = very good
- 5 = excellent

All businesses must reach a minimum score of 60% in order to be accredited under VisitEngland's Taste scheme. A score between 60% and 79% will result in a Taste Accolade being awarded. A score of 80% or above will result in a Taste Gold Accolade being awarded.

In some instances, the score will be double weighted. These instances are clearly outlined in the scoring criteria.

After the visit, you will receive a detailed written report outlining your scores and the assessor's experience. Positive aspects of your business will be outlined, as well as areas for improvement. This will give you a benchmark for maintaining the quality of your services and facilities and will help you to prioritise and plan future developments.

## Assessing in context

VisitEngland's Taste scheme is suitable for all types of food businesses, and our team of assessors will make sure that when they are completing your visit, they will assess in context. For example, they will recognise that the experience at a fine dining restaurant would be very different to the experience in a fish and chip shop, and will award scores accordingly. Businesses will not be penalised for not providing something which would not be expected, for example, individual menus in a takeaway or linen napkins and a wine list in a high street restaurant. They will always take into account the type of establishment and the expectations that a typical customer at that establishment would have.

# Sustainability & Accessibility

## Sustainability: Doing Business Even Better

Green tourism and sustainability practices in your business are one and the same thing; it's all about taking small steps that enable you to do business even better, not differently. Small changes will not only save money, improve employee relations, enhance profitability and provide a richer experience for customers but over time you will also improve your business' impact on the local economy, community and environment. 'Going Green' does not have to be a chore and is just as applicable to properties in a city centre as a rural location.

## VisitEngland Can Help

VisitEngland is committed to promoting the adoption of sustainability practices among all tourism businesses. It is our aim to ensure that a sustainable approach is complimentary to improving the overall visitor experience in England. Your help is needed in this aspiration.

For further information on how to enhance your business to be more sustainable, along with case studies on the benefits of adopting sustainable practices, please visit [www.visitengland.org/green](http://www.visitengland.org/green).

## Improving your Accessibility – A Lucrative Market

Many people have accessibility requirements including disabled people, such as those with hearing loss and visual impairments, wheelchair users, older and less mobile people and people with pushchairs. The accessible tourism market is worth around £12bn to tourism businesses in England and is growing due to an ageing population.

By making some small adjustments to your facilities, providing information on your

accessibility and understanding the needs of disabled people, your business will appeal to a wider range of visitors and attract more business. Demand for accessible venues outstrips the current supply. Find out how other tourism businesses are benefitting from this loyal market at [www.visitengland.org/access](http://www.visitengland.org/access).

## Legal Obligations

Tourism businesses have obligations under The Equality Act 2010, which replaced the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 (DDA) on 1 October 2010. Tourism providers should treat everyone accessing their goods, facilities or services fairly, regardless of their gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religion or belief, and guard against making assumptions about the characteristics of individuals.

The Equality Act 2010 requires that service providers must think ahead and take steps to address barriers that impede disabled people. Providers should not wait until a disabled person experiences difficulties using a service, as this may make it too late to make the necessary adjustment.

1. Make 'reasonable' changes to the way things are done – such as changing practices, policies or procedures where disabled people would be at a 'substantial disadvantage' e.g. amend a 'no dogs' policy.
2. Make 'reasonable' changes to the built environment – such as making changes to the structure of a building to improve access e.g. altering or removing a physical feature.
3. Provide auxiliary aids and services – such as providing information in an accessible format, an induction loop for customers with hearing aids.

A service provider cannot legally justify failing to provide a reasonable adjustment. The only question is whether the adjustment is a 'reasonable' one to make. What is 'reasonable' will depend on a number of circumstances, including the cost of an adjustment, potential benefit it may bring to other customers, the resources an organisation has and how practical the changes are.

### **We Can Help**

VisitEngland provides tourism businesses with a range of guidance, tools and resources to help increase engagement with the valuable

accessible tourism market. Go to [www.visitengland.org/access](http://www.visitengland.org/access).

It is important to provide information on the accessibility of your facilities and services. This can be achieved by producing an Accessibility Guide (an improved format that replaces Access Statements), which is a requirement for all scheme participants. To produce and publish an Accessibility Guide go to [www.visitengland.org/accessibilityguides](http://www.visitengland.org/accessibilityguides).

More detailed guidance and accessibility ratings are provided by the National Accessible Scheme (NAS): [www.visitengland.org/nas](http://www.visitengland.org/nas).

# Taste scheme criteria

## 1. Statutory obligations

In addition to the scoring criteria, all VisitEngland Taste accredited businesses must comply with all relevant statutory requirements, including:

- a.** Completion of a Fire Risk Assessment, to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005  
*Businesses must supply the assessor with evidence that an annual Fire Risk Assessment has been carried out. For more information and a free online tool designed specifically for tourist accommodation, see [www.visitengland.org/fire](http://www.visitengland.org/fire)*
- b.** Food Safety and Hygiene legislation, and registration with the local Environmental Health department  
*Before your assessment, the assessor will check the establishment's Food Hygiene Rating on [www.ratings.food.gov.uk](http://www.ratings.food.gov.uk). Only businesses with a Food Hygiene Rating of 3 (hygiene standards are generally satisfactory) or above will be eligible for a Taste Accolade. Only businesses with a Food Hygiene Rating of 5 (hygiene standards are very good) will be eligible for a Taste Gold Accolade*
- c.** Health & Safety legislation
- d.** Local planning and licensing regulations
- e.** Equality Act 2010
- f.** Public Liability Insurance  
*While not a statutory requirement, this is a requirement for participation in VisitEngland's Taste scheme. Businesses must supply the assessor with evidence that this is in place.*
- g.** Accessibility Guide  
*While not a statutory requirement, this is a requirement for participation in VisitEngland's Taste scheme. Businesses must supply the assessor with evidence of their completed Accessibility Guide.*

For more information on legislation, visit [www.visitengland.org/pinkbookonline](http://www.visitengland.org/pinkbookonline).

## 2. Dining Experience

### 2.1. Exterior (5 marks)

The quality, condition and maintenance of all exterior areas, including decoration, signage, lighting, menu displays, walls, windows, paintwork, doors, planters, the garden and the car park.

### 2.2. Interior (5 marks)

The quality, condition and maintenance of all interior areas, including decoration, signage, lighting, walls, windows, paintwork, doors, flooring, pictures, soft furnishings and the bathrooms.

### 2.3. Furniture, fittings and table presentation (5 marks)

The quality, condition and maintenance of seating, tables, crockery, cutlery, glassware, napkins, tablecloths, condiments, table vases, candles and menus (on tables or on walls/blackboards), as well as any other relevant items.

Menus should be easy to read, sufficiently descriptive and with prices clearly displayed.

### 2.4. Cleanliness (5 marks)

The cleanliness of all areas – the exterior, interior, bathrooms and any staff areas that can be seen by customers.

### 2.5. Ambience (5 marks)

The size, positioning and spacing of tables for comfort, privacy and ease of serving.

Use of background music or TVs.

Use of plants and decorative elements.

Space for queuing at counters etc.

The temperature of the interior will also be taken into account here.

### 3. Staff

#### 3.1. Staff appearance (5 marks)

The presentation and appearance of all staff.

#### 3.2. Arrival & departure (5 marks)

A greeting, acknowledgement or offer of help should be made on arrival. A farewell or thanks should be offered on departure.

#### 3.3. Bar – hospitality (5 marks)

Service at the bar should be friendly and enthusiastic with eye contact.

#### 3.4. Bar – knowledge (5 marks)

Bar staff should be knowledgeable about the range of drinks available and how to serve them.

A choice of brands, ice and appropriate accompaniments should be offered and the correct type of glass should be used.

#### 3.5. Bar – efficiency (5 marks)

Service should be prompt and efficient. Sufficient staff should be available to serve.

#### 3.6. Food service – hospitality (5 marks)

Food service should be friendly and enthusiastic with eye contact.

#### 3.7. Food service – knowledge (5 marks)

Food service staff should have good menu knowledge and be able to recommend dishes. Questions should be answered accurately. Staff should be aware of specials and any unavailable items.

All staff should have knowledge of allergens present in all menu items, or know where to find this information.

#### 3.8. Food service – efficiency (5 marks)

There should be sufficient staff for the style of service. They should provide additional items as required, e.g. new cutlery, condiments, etc.

Service should be provided in a timely manner, e.g. prompt service, sufficient but not excessive time between courses, the bill handled without delay. Table clearance should be carried out promptly and efficiently.

Payment should be handled efficiently.

## 4. Food & Drink

Double weighting applies to all elements within this section.

### 4.1. Menu – choice & balance of food (10 marks)

There should be a range of vegetarian, vegan and special diet options, as well as a range of meat and fish options, as appropriate for the style of business.

There should be balance in the menu, e.g. traditional options and more imaginative or creative choices.

If appropriate, a children's menu should be available.

### 4.2. Menu – food as described on the menu (10 marks)

Each dish should match the description on the menu, without any missing or additional ingredients.

### 4.3. Quality & taste of food

#### 4.3.1 Course 1 (10 marks)

#### 4.3.2 Course 2 (10 marks)

#### 4.3.3 Course 3 (10 marks)

The assessor will consider the quality and freshness of ingredients, the balance of flavours and textures, and the seasoning of the dish.

Cooking methods will be considered, everything should be prepared with skill.

### 4.4. Presentation of food

#### 4.4.1 Course 1 (10 marks)

#### 4.4.2 Course 2 (10 marks)

#### 4.4.3 Course 3 (10 marks)

The assessor will consider the use of garnishes and accompaniments, temperature and size of the plate, etc. Obvious care should be taken with the presentation of the food.

If hot plates or refrigeration units are used, food should be kept at the correct temperature.

If food is self-serve, displays should be kept topped up and well presented.

### 4.5. Choice & quality of drinks (10 marks)

There should be an appropriate range of drinks available.

Drinks should be kept and served in peak condition and at optimum temperature.

## 5. Local Food Accolade

Businesses which utilise a significant number of local ingredients and/or local suppliers, and which offer local speciality dishes on the menu, may be eligible for a Local Food Accolade. Evidence of local ingredients, suppliers or dishes must be clearly highlighted to customers on menus and staff should be able to provide further information when asked. Examples include:

- Local ingredients: meat, fish, dairy, eggs, fruit, vegetables, beer, wine, cider, soft drinks etc.
- Local suppliers: farms, breweries, vineyards, specialist suppliers, retailers etc.
- Local dishes: Bakewell tart, Lancashire hotpot, Yorkshire parkin

Where there is clear evidence of strong support for local ingredients, suppliers and dishes, assessors will make a nomination for a Local Food Accolade.

Taste